



NATIONAL DEFENSE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

# What Veterans Bring to Civilian Workplaces

A Prototype Toolkit for Helping Private-Sector Employers Understand the Nontechnical Skills Taught in the Military

Chaitra M. Hardison, Michael G. Shanley, Anna Rosefsky Saavedra,  
James C. Crowley, Jonathan P. Wong, Paul S. Steinberg

Report Documentation Page			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188		
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE <b>2014</b>		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-2014 to 00-00-2014</b>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>What Veterans Bring to Civilian Workplaces: A Prototype Toolkit for Helping Private-Sector Employers Understand the Nontechnical Skills Taught in the Military</b>			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S)			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>RAND Corporation,,Santa Monica,,CA</b>			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES <b>AT&amp;L FY14 RDTE Studies</b>					
14. ABSTRACT <b>Veterans have a great deal to offer to potential civilian employers, including valuable nontechnical or soft skills, such as leadership, decisionmaking, persistence, and attention to detail. However, for civilian employers, understanding what nontechnical skills veterans have received formal training in and can likely demonstrate on the job can be challenging, because military and civilian workplace cultures and languages can seem radically different from one another. In this study, Phase I of a two-part effort, we developed a pilot toolkit that civilian employers can use to understand the full value veterans can bring to their organizations. In the current version of the toolkit, we focus on the skills addressed through selected formal military education courses for enlisted personnel in the Army and Marine Corps. Future research conducted in FY 2014 will expand the toolkit to address skills attained through additional on-the-job experience.</b>					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT <b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>54</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

For more information on this publication, visit [www.rand.org/t/TL160](http://www.rand.org/t/TL160)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available for this publication.

ISBN: 978-0-8330-8902-1

Published by the RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, Calif.

© Copyright 2015 RAND Corporation

**RAND**® is a registered trademark.

#### Limited Print and Electronic Distribution Rights

This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law. This representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for noncommercial use only. Unauthorized posting of this publication online is prohibited. Permission is given to duplicate this document for personal use only, as long as it is unaltered and complete. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of its research documents for commercial use. For information on reprint and linking permissions, please visit [www.rand.org/pubs/permissions.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/permissions.html).

The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND is nonprofit, nonpartisan, and committed to the public interest.

RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors.

#### Support RAND

Make a tax-deductible charitable contribution at  
[www.rand.org/giving/contribute](http://www.rand.org/giving/contribute)

[www.rand.org](http://www.rand.org)

## Preface

---

Veterans have a great deal to offer to potential civilian employers, including valuable nontechnical—or “soft”—skills, such as leadership, decisionmaking, persistence, and attention to detail. However, for civilian employers, understanding what nontechnical skills veterans have received formal training in and can likely demonstrate on the job can be challenging, because military and civilian workplace cultures and languages can seem radically different from one another. In this study, Phase I of a two-part effort, we developed a pilot toolkit that civilian employers can use to understand the full value veterans can bring to their organizations. In the current version of the toolkit, we focus on the skills addressed through selected formal military education courses for enlisted personnel in the Army and Marine Corps. Future research conducted in FY 2015 will expand the toolkit to address skills attained through additional on-the-job experience.

This toolkit is intended to be sent to employers as a packet of materials that can help employers better understand veterans’ formal skill training and its transferability to the civilian workplace. The toolkit consists of four parts:

- a letter that can be sent to employers, explaining the purpose of the other materials enclosed in the packet
- an introductory section that provides more information on the materials and how to use them, as well as some background on military terms
- course overviews—descriptions of the specific training programs that the Army and Marine Corps use to teach and develop nontechnical skills
- summary tables that concisely break down which specific skills and competencies each course focuses on, as well as which ranks of military personnel take each course.

This toolkit should be valuable to civilian employers, veterans, and career counselors. The toolkit should also be of interest to Office of the Secretary of Defense and U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs personnel who are committed to increasing veterans’ gainful civilian employment.

This research was sponsored by the Transition to Veterans Program Office of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. It was conducted within the Forces and Resources Policy Center of the RAND National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Unified Combatant Commands, the Navy, the U.S. Marine Corps, the defense agencies, and the defense Intelligence Community. For more information on the RAND Forces and Resources Policy Center, see <http://www.rand.org/nsrd/ndri/centers/frp.html> or contact the director (contact information is provided on the web page).



# Contents

---

<b>Preface</b> .....	iii
<b>Letter to Employer</b> .....	1
<b>Introduction and Guide to Using This Toolkit</b> .....	3
Using the Course Summary Tables and Course Overviews .....	3
How should civilian employers use this toolkit to review veterans' résumés and conduct interviews with veterans? .....	4
Scope of This Toolkit .....	4
Which nontechnical skills does this toolkit cover? .....	5
Are the skills discussed in this toolkit a comprehensive list of the skills veterans possess? .....	7
Have veterans taken courses other than those described in this toolkit? .....	7
What about the skills veterans develop through on-the-job training? .....	8
Where can employers learn about veterans' technical skills, as opposed to nontechnical skills? ....	8
Can the information in this toolkit be generalized to non-combat arms personnel? .....	8
Some Background on Military Terms and Organization .....	8
What are the Army and Marine Corps enlisted ranks and titles, and what do they mean? .....	8
What are squads, platoons, and companies? .....	9
What are the combat arms occupations and the combat arms branches? .....	10
<b>Course Summary Tables</b> .....	11
Summary of Nontechnical Skills Addressed in Army Courses .....	12
Summary of Nontechnical Skills Addressed in Marine Corps Courses .....	13
<b>Course Overviews</b> .....	15
Army Basic Combat Training .....	16
Army Warrior Leader Course .....	19
Army Advanced Leader Course .....	23
Army Senior Leader Course .....	27
Marine Corps Corporals Course .....	31
Marine Corps Sergeants Course .....	34
Marine Corps Career Course .....	38
Marine Corps Advanced Course .....	42

<b>Technical Appendix</b> .....	45
How was this toolkit developed? .....	45
What are the limitations of this toolkit? .....	45
What courses do we cover in this toolkit? .....	46
Why are there no X's in the Marine Corps summary table for recruit training? .....	46
Why do the skills addressed in Army and Marine Corps courses for similarly ranked personnel differ? .....	46

Dear Employer:

Your prospective employees clearly need both the technical skills and nontechnical (valued) skills required for your jobs, such as leadership, teamwork, team-building, critical thinking, and handling stress. Transitioning Service members and Veterans are especially likely to have well-developed valued skills because, unlike most civilians, they have received formal, extensive, in-residence professional military training in programs that explicitly and implicitly teach these valuable skills.

Understanding which valued skills transitioning Service members and Veterans have received formally throughout their military training can be a challenge for those not familiar with the intricacies of military training and education. The attached toolkit will communicate the full value of the training and skills gained in the military and help you understand the benefit that transitioning Service members and Veterans can bring to civilian workplaces.

This toolkit consists of course overviews that describe the specific training programs that the United States Army and Marine Corps use to teach and develop valued skills. These course overviews are accompanied by summary tables that concisely break down which specific valued skills and competencies each course focuses on, as well as which ranks of military personnel take each course.

These materials are intended to make the military world more accessible and understandable to you, the civilian employer. You can focus on the summary tables or more detailed course descriptions, depending on your desired level of detail.

We hope that this toolkit will help you to better understand Veterans' formal skill training and its transferability to the civilian workplace, and assist you in reviewing résumés, conducting interviews, and making hiring decisions about qualified Veterans.

Sincerely,

Susan S. Kelly, Ph.D.

Director, Transition to Veterans Program Office  
Office of the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness  
Department of Defense, Washington, D.C. 20301





## Introduction and Guide to Using This Toolkit

---

Veterans have received extensive, formal, in-residence training in nontechnical skills—such as teamwork, oral and written communication, and continuous learning—that all employers value. Veterans often have a competitive advantage for civilian employment because many of their civilian counterparts of equivalent age and educational experience have not received comparable training.

However, many veterans find it challenging to communicate, in nonmilitary terms, about the skills they have developed through formal military training. Many veterans may not even realize that the extensive, in-residence formal training they received in the military has helped them build skills that make them competitive for civilian jobs. Civilian employers also find it difficult to understand which skills veterans may have formal training in and how military experiences could make veterans well suited for civilian jobs.

The purpose of this toolkit is to clearly, concretely, succinctly, and in civilian terms identify and describe the skills in which veterans have formal military training, shedding light on the full value veterans can bring to the civilian workplace. The bulk of this toolkit consist of course overviews: descriptions of the specific training programs that the Army and Marine Corps use to teach and develop nontechnical skills, including both which skills and competencies the courses seek to develop and the approaches they use. These course overviews are accompanied by summary tables that concisely break down which specific skills and competencies each course focuses on, as well as which ranks of military personnel take each course.

This introductory section provides some guidance on how to use the summary tables and course overviews, and it provides some background on this toolkit and on military terms and organization. We have organized much of this toolkit in a question-and-answer format so that the reader can more easily skim for topics of interest.

### Using the Course Summary Tables and Course Overviews

The two course summary tables on pp. 12 and 13 summarize the top nontechnical skills addressed in each course offered to members of the Army and Marine Corps combat arms occupations. These tables are meant as quick reference guides for employers. The course overviews elaborate on the table content, with examples of how the skills are practiced or taught in each course.

Employers can consult the course overviews to get a better sense for how the military workplace may not be all that different in many ways from the civilian workplace. The skills they teach, although perhaps often applied to a wartime activity, are also extremely valuable for the civilian workplace. It is not too hard to see how civilian organizations might benefit if the veteran can apply those skills in other contexts.

***How should civilian employers use this toolkit to review veterans' résumés and conduct interviews with veterans?***

Many veterans will list the courses they have taken in the military on their résumés. If you see courses listed on a veteran's résumé, we recommend that you look at the tables and read through relevant course summaries (2–4 pages each) to learn more about the formal training the applicant has received.

Many veterans may not list their military training courses on their résumés. However, their résumés may indicate their rank, and you can use the tables to see which courses that veterans of the rank may have taken. For example, consulting the Army course summary table shows that an Army veteran with the rank of E-6 (staff sergeant) will likely have taken the Warrior Leader Course and the Basic Combat Training Course. If so, that Army E-6 applicant will have received training in all of the skills listed in the Army summary table under those two courses.

We also anticipate that this toolkit will help inform the types of interview questions you direct toward qualified veteran applicants. For example, you might say, “I understand you are a U.S. Marine Corps E-5 veteran and that you may have enrolled in the Corporals Course. Could you please tell me about the types of leadership, team-building, and critical thinking skills you developed through that course?”

Some veterans may not have taken any of the courses listed in the course summary tables. However, given the military's strong focus on developing the skills listed in the tables in all personnel, there is a strong likelihood that they have enrolled in courses that are similar to those described in this toolkit. These materials can therefore also prompt general interview questions and discussion about the skills veteran job applicants may have developed through all of their training and military experiences.

**Scope of This Toolkit**

This pilot effort focuses on the nontechnical skills of enlisted veterans in the Army and Marine Corps. It further focuses on soldiers and marines in combat arms occupations—that is, personnel who are expected to directly participate in tactical land combat (which is the majority of soldiers and marines). We plan to expand the toolkit to address skills attained through additional on-the-job experience.

### **Which nontechnical skills does this toolkit cover?**

**Decisionmaking/decisiveness** (related terms: *evaluating, assessing*): Chooses the best solution or option in a timely and decisive manner, even in ambiguous situations and without assistance when appropriate.

**Critical thinking** (related terms: *analytic thinking, reasoning, argumentation, interpretation, problem solving*): Actively and skillfully conceptualizes, applies, analyzes, synthesizes, and evaluates information to formulate options and to reach a conclusion. Demonstrates mental agility and the ability to reason, anticipate obstacles, identify problems, locate, gather, and organize relevant information, generate alternatives, evaluate and analyze information, and apply what is learned.

**Continuous learning** (related terms: *adaptive learning, willingness to learn, active learning, metacognition*): Takes the necessary actions to develop and maintain knowledge, skills, and expertise; demonstrates an interest in learning; anticipates work changes; identifies career interests; applies a range of learning techniques; integrates newly learned knowledge and skills with existing knowledge and skills; and is aware of own cognitive processes.

**Training others** (related terms: *developing, mentoring*): Plans, organizes, and conducts activities that increase the capability of individuals or organizations to perform specified tasks or skills. Has knowledge and experience applying employee development concepts, principles, and practices related to planning, evaluating, and administering training and education initiatives.

**Teamwork and team-building** (related terms: *team player, followership, cooperation, collaboration*): Works well with others to perform team tasks; acknowledges team membership and role; establishes productive relationships with other team members; and identifies with the team and its goals. Team-building activities include improving the ability of a team to work together to accomplish a task or activity; resolving conflicts within a team; developing collaboration to promote learning and expand team perspectives; discouraging unproductive behavior among team members; and encouraging and building mutual trust, respect, and cooperation.

**Interpersonal skills** (related terms: *demonstrating concern for others, demonstrating insight into behavior, oral communication, intercultural skills*): Works well with others. Shows sincere interest in and sensitivity to others and their concerns, needs, and feelings; recognizes and accurately interprets the verbal and nonverbal behavior of others; shows insight into the actions and motives of others and recognizes when relationships with others are strained; and maintains open lines of communication with others.

**Oral communication** (related terms: *speaking, public speaking, persuasive speaking, debating, active listening, two-way communication, critical thinking*): Expresses information orally to individuals or groups, taking into account the audience and the nature of the information; persuasively presents thoughts and ideas; receives, attends to, interprets, understands, and responds to verbal messages and other cues; practices meaningful two-way communica-

tion; picks out important information in oral messages; understands and is able to process complex oral instructions; and appreciates feelings and concerns of oral messages.

**Written communication** (related terms: *writing*): Creates documents, such as letters, directions, manuals, reports, graphs, and flow charts; communicates thoughts, ideas, information, messages, and other written information in a logical, organized, and coherent manner; presents well-developed ideas, with supporting information and examples. Uses standard grammar and sentence structure, correct spelling, and appropriate tone and word choice.

**Operating safely** (related terms: *safety and risk management*): Identifies and carefully weighs safety risks in making decisions and adheres to safety rules and regulations. Fosters a safety culture, wears safety gear, and encourages others to follow safety rules and speak openly of their safety concerns. Has knowledge of the principles, methods, and tools used for risk assessment and mitigation, including assessment of failures and their consequences.

**Handling work stress** (related terms: *productive stress management, resilience, effectiveness under pressure, triumph over adversity*): Functions effectively under pressure; remains composed under pressure and high-stress situations; does not overreact; manages frustration and other stresses well; acts as a calming and settling influence on others. Exhibits a hardiness of spirit despite physical and mental hardships; possesses moral and physical courage.

**Being dependable and reliable** (related terms: *integrity, honesty, getting the activity done*): Behaves consistently and predictably; is reliable, responsible, and dependable in fulfilling obligations; diligently follows through on commitments and consistently meets deadlines. Displays integrity and honesty in all workplace interactions.

**Conscientiousness and attention to detail** (related terms: *conscientiousness, respect for procedures, discipline, autonomy, productivity*): Performs assigned tasks and responsibilities diligently even when not under direct supervision; displays self-discipline and self-control; diligently checks work to ensure that all essential details have been considered; follows oral and written directions; complies with organizational rules, policies, and procedures.

**Persistence** (related terms: *perseverance, grit, work ethic*): Works hard to achieve a goal or accomplish an assigned task. Won't quit, does not tend to procrastinate, and completes tasks once begun. Sees work through to completion. Even in the face of failure, keeps trying. Tends to believe that success is always attainable with hard work and persistence. Works hard even when the reward is small, unlikely to be obtained, or will only be realized far into the future.

**Project planning** (related terms: *project management, strategic planning, organization, coordination, planning, scheduling, delegating*): Identifies resources, plans, organizes, schedules, and coordinates tasks and activities so that work is completed effectively and efficiently. Prioritizes various competing tasks and performs them quickly and efficiently according to their urgency. Finds new ways of organizing work areas or planning to accomplish work more efficiently.

**Leading, motivating, and inspiring others to accomplish organizational goals** (related terms: *motivating, inspiring, mentoring, encouraging, developing*): Influences and inspires others by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the organization's tasks and goals and improve the organization's capabilities; adapts leadership styles to a variety of situations; offers career development opportunities to subordinates; mentors others' skills, abilities, attitudes, future intentions, and career issues; recognizes achievements; sets an example for others; encourages other's self-assessment and enhancement of skills in an activity; and promotes training, learning, and preparing for the future. Generates enthusiasm for task objectives and team accomplishment through standard and creative influence techniques. Recognizes contributions and achievements of all types, among people in high- and low-visibility activities alike. Rewards employees for high performance. Sets an example for others by acting in ways that are consistent with organizational goals and objectives.

**Managing/supervising the work of others:** Organizes, coordinates, and leads subordinates in work efforts to effectively and efficiently accomplish organizational goals and objectives. Involves staffing, delegating roles and responsibilities, clarifying objectives, and monitoring, assessing, adjusting, and rewarding the actions of subordinates. Requires knowledge and experience applying performance management concepts, principles, and practices.

#### Definition Sources

Office of Personnel Management, *Multipurpose Occupational Systems Analysis Inventory—Close-Ended (MOSAIC) Competencies*, 2013. As of February 16, 2015:  
<http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/competencies/mosaic-studies-competencies.pdf>

Office of Personnel Management, *Delegated Examining Operations Handbook: A Guide for Federal Agency Examining Offices*, 2007. As of February 16, 2015:  
[http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-authorities/competitive-hiring/deo\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-authorities/competitive-hiring/deo_handbook.pdf)

U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration Competency Model Clearinghouse. As of February 16, 2015:  
<http://www.careeronestop.org/CompetencyModel/>

#### **Are the skills discussed in this toolkit a comprehensive list of the skills veterans possess?**

No, veterans are likely to have developed skills through courses and on-the-job experience beyond those listed in the tables and described in the course overviews. Many, and perhaps most, veterans will have taken courses beyond those covered in this toolkit, and those courses emphasize skills beyond those listed in these materials. Further, there are some skills that, though not the focus of a single course, permeate the entire military culture, such as operating safely and continuous learning.

#### **Have veterans taken courses other than those described in this toolkit?**

Yes. While we chose courses that applied to a large number of veterans, the courses included in this toolkit are not intended to cover all the formal education of service members. Veterans from the Air Force, Navy, non-combat arms Army and Marine Corps, and higher ranks—as

well as veterans from Army and Marine Corps combat arms—have had opportunities to enroll in many more courses than are described in this toolkit. It is appropriate and useful for veterans to list courses beyond those described in this toolkit in their résumés and for employers to ask about these other courses in their interviews.

***What about the skills veterans develop through on-the-job training?***

This toolkit is the first stage of a larger effort. The next stage is to document the skills veterans gain through on-the-job experience. In the meantime, we recommend that civilian employers ask veterans to describe the nontechnical skills they have gained on the job.

***Where can employers learn about veterans' technical skills, as opposed to nontechnical skills?***

The purpose of this toolkit is to document and describe in civilian terms the nontechnical skills addressed through formal military training. Other existing resources describe technical military training. For example, see the technical skill translator resource that Military.com created in partnership with Monster.com: <http://www.military.com/veteran-jobs/skills-translator/>. Military.com, with 10 million members, is the largest military and veteran membership organization.

***Can the information in this toolkit be generalized to non-combat arms personnel?***

Yes, in many cases. This pilot effort focuses primarily on documenting the nontechnical training received by personnel in all Army and Marine Corps enlisted occupations and on training that is specifically required for selected combat arms occupations. However, many training courses not included in the pilot offer comparable training in nontechnical skills (e.g., the services teach all personnel to work in teams). Further, veterans may be able to model the approach used in the course descriptions—using concrete examples and nonmilitary language—to comparably describe the skills they have developed through their own occupations and training experiences. In this way, the information in this toolkit may generalize to many noncombat enlisted personnel.

## **Some Background on Military Terms and Organization**

***What are the Army and Marine Corps enlisted ranks and titles, and what do they mean?***

Veterans' résumés may indicate their enlisted grade, which ranges from E-1 to E-9. (For example, "E-1" indicates "enlisted grade 1.") The rank title that each grade corresponds to may vary within each military service. For example, in the Army, a soldier with the grade of E-3 is a private first class, but in the Marine Corps, a marine with the grade of E-3 is a lance corporal. The table on the next page summarizes the titles associated with each enlisted grade in the Army and Marine Corps.

Military personnel generally fall into three categories: enlisted personnel (grades E-1 to E-9), warrant officers (grades W-1 to W-5), and commissioned officers (grades O-1 to O-10). Enlisted personnel from grade E-4 to E-9 (but not E-4 specialists) are called noncommissioned officers, or NCOs, and have a leadership role over other enlisted personnel.



**Enlisted Grades and Titles in the Army and Marine Corps**

Grade	Army Title	Marine Corps Title
E-1	Private	Private
E-2	Private	Private First Class
E-3	Private First Class	Lance Corporal
E-4	Specialist	Corporal
E-4	Corporal	Corporal
E-5	Sergeant	Sergeant
E-6	Staff Sergeant	Staff Sergeant
E-7	Sergeant First Class	Gunnery Sergeant
E-8	Master Sergeant or First Sergeant	Master Sergeant or First Sergeant
E-9	Sergeant Major or Command Sergeant Major	Master Gunnery Sergeant, Sergeant Major, or Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps

Enlisted personnel, including NCOs, are by far the greatest in number. They are the specialists that perform the primary work that needs to be done in the military. Nearly all enlisted personnel enter the military at the very lowest level, referred to as the grade of E-1. E-1s enter into basic training, their first military training course. After completing basic training, they are assigned to a specific job (mechanic, medic, infantry, police, etc.), trained in that job, and placed in an assignment in which they carry out that job. Enlisted personnel can be promoted up through the grade of E-9. As they move up the ranks, they are given positions of increasing responsibility, including directly supervising an increasing number of subordinates, as do foremen and line supervisors in the civilian workplace. More senior enlisted personnel are typically in positions similar to managers who have worked themselves up the ranks in a civilian workplace.

***What are squads, platoons, and companies?***

The Army and the Marine Corps are structured into hierarchical teams of personnel. Although there are some differences by service and occupation, as military personnel move up through the hierarchy, they gain experience leading and overseeing a larger and larger workforce. A *squad* is one of the smallest groups. It is typically led by a mid- to high-level enlisted person (E-5 to E-6 in the Army, or an E-5 in the Marine Corps) and consists of about 8 to 16 personnel. The next level in the hierarchy is a *platoon*, which consists of about 2 to 4 squads and somewhere between 16 to 44 personnel. Junior-level officers (a second or first lieutenant, or O-1 or O-2) typically lead platoons with assistance from a more seasoned enlisted person (an E-7 in the Army and an E-6 in the Marine Corps). Above platoons are *companies*, which consist of 3 to 4 platoons and anywhere from about 60 to 200 personnel. Midlevel officers (a captain, or O-3) typically command companies with assistance from a higher-level enlisted person (a first sergeant, or E-8). Higher levels in the hierarchy also exist (such as battalions and brigades) but are less relevant to the courses described in this toolkit. Note that, while this organizational structure is similar across different occupations, there are some variations in naming conven-



tions (for example, the equivalent of a company in an artillery unit is a *battery*) and more variation outside combat arms units.

For further examples, see the information provided at [www.army.mil](http://www.army.mil):

- U.S. Army, “Operational Unit Diagrams,” no date. As of February 16, 2015:  
<http://www.army.mil/info/organization/unitsandcommands/oud/>
- U.S. Marine Corps, *Organization of Marine Corps Forces*, Marine Corps Reference Document 5-12D, Washington, D.C., 1998. As of February 16, 2015:  
<http://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/Publications/MCRP%205-12D%20Organization%20of%20Marine%20Corps%20Forces.pdf>

### ***What are the combat arms occupations and the combat arms branches?***

Combat arms occupations are those where personnel are expected to directly participate in tactical land combat. Exactly which occupations are considered combat arms varies by service. For purposes of this document, we considered occupations within infantry, armor, and artillery to be combat arms. These three groups (infantry, armor, and artillery) are *occupational branches*; within each branch, there are multiple specific job types (called *occupational specialties*). The combat arms branches make up a substantial portion of the transitioning veterans in the Army and Marine Corps.

## Course Summary Tables

---

The tables in this section summarize the top nontechnical skills addressed in each course offered to members of the Army and Marine Corps combat arms occupations. These tables are meant as quick reference guides for employers. The course overviews in the subsequent section elaborate on the table content through examples of how the skills are practiced or taught in each respective course.

The first table summarizes skills developed through selected Army courses, including two courses that all Army personnel enroll in and two in which a large proportion of personnel in combat arms occupations enroll. The second table summarizes skills developed through four selected Marine Corps courses in which most marines enroll.

In each table, the columns list courses, organized from left to right in the sequence taken (so skills developed are cumulative, reading from left to right). Under each course title, we indicate the ranks that most commonly enroll in each course. There is a one-to-one correspondence between courses and ranks in the Marine Corps but not the Army.

The rows in each table list skills. X's indicate that a given skill is among the top skills emphasized in a given course.

Note that some skills we considered (such as operating safely and continuous learning) do not appear in the summary tables because we determined that none of the courses we reviewed significantly developed those skills. However, civilian employers should be aware that veterans have been exposed through other courses, military culture, and on-the-job experience to the importance of operating safely and continuous learning—as well as other nontechnical skills—and structure their interview and selection processes accordingly.

### ***Are the skills marked in the summary tables cumulative?***

Yes. If a soldier enrolled in the Army's Warrior Leader course as an E-5, he or she would also have completed the relevant Basic Combat Training course as an E-1, E-2, or E-3 and so would have received formal training in the valued skills marked under both courses. The summary tables are organized to show that the courses for lower-ranked personnel focus on developing such skills as handling work stress and being dependable, whereas courses for higher ranks focus more on leadership, team-building, and supervising.

### ***Why do the skills appear to change as someone's rank increases?***

While the skills emphasized by course change with increases in rank, the reasons for those changes are largely intuitive. In the Army table, the course completed by the most junior-level

personnel is Basic Combat Training. The skills emphasized in that course are noticeably different from those taught in the courses targeting the more senior-level personnel. This suggests that, as personnel increase in their seniority and experience levels, the military introduces them to new skills that are appropriate to changes in their level of responsibility. A similar shift in emphasized skills can be seen in the Marine Corps table, although the shift is less pronounced because the table does not include the most junior-level course.

### Summary of Nontechnical Skills Addressed in Army Courses

Skill Addressed	Basic Combat Training (entry-level personnel: E-1–E-2) <sup>a</sup>	Warrior Leader Course (midlevel personnel: E-4–E-5) <sup>a</sup>	Advanced Leader Course (mid- to senior-level personnel: E-5–E-6) <sup>b</sup>	Senior Leader Course (senior-level personnel: E-6–E-7) <sup>b</sup>
Handling work stress	X			
Being dependable and reliable	X			
Persistence	X			
Conscientiousness and attention to detail	X			
Interpersonal skills	X	X		
Teamwork and team-building	X	X	X	X
Oral communication		X	X	X
Managing and supervising the work of others		X	X	X
Decisionmaking/decisiveness		X		X
Training others		X		X
Leading, motivating, and inspiring others to accomplish organizational goals		X		
Critical thinking				X
Project planning				X

<sup>a</sup> Taken by all Army personnel

<sup>b</sup> All combat arms personnel take a version of this course; however, some of the content and emphasis may differ by job or by job grouping (i.e., by occupational branch). Here, we report only those skills that instructors have indicated are common to all versions of the course for Armor and Infantry jobs.

## Summary of Nontechnical Skills Addressed in Marine Corps Courses

Skill Addressed	Recruit Training (entry-level personnel E-1–E-2) <sup>a</sup>	Corporals Course (midlevel personnel: E-4) <sup>b</sup>	Sergeants Course (mid- to senior-level personnel: E-5) <sup>b</sup>	Career Course (senior-level personnel: E-6) <sup>b</sup>	Advanced Course (senior-level personnel: E-7) <sup>b</sup>
Handling work stress	See note a				
Being dependable and reliable	See note a				
Persistence	See note a				
Interpersonal skills	See note a				
Conscientiousness and attention to detail	See note a				
Teamwork and team-building		X			
Critical thinking		X	X	X	
Leading, motivating, and inspiring others to accomplish organizational goals		X	X	X	
Oral communication			X	X	
Written communication			X	X	
Decisionmaking/decisiveness			X	X	X
Training others			X		X

<sup>a</sup> Recruit training materials were not available in our pilot study. We anticipate that a review of those materials would produce results similar to those found in the Army. However, this premise has not yet been confirmed.

<sup>b</sup> Taken by a subset of personnel. Not completed by all marines.



## Course Overviews

---

The course overviews use concrete examples to explain how military courses develop skills that are transferable to the civilian workplace in terms civilian employers understand. The summaries are each structured as follows:

- **Bottom line:** The key takeaway for each course in terms of the top-valued nontechnical skills developed.
- **Course description:** A concise description of the course that addresses audience, time-frame, and main learning goals.
- **Top-valued skills emphasized:** Explanations and examples of each of the top-valued skills emphasized in the course.
- **Other skills and competencies taught:** A brief discussion of some of the other nontechnical skills addressed in the course, including explanations and examples (if applicable).
- **Key training activity:** A discussion of a key course activity, usually a culminating or “capstone” activity, and how that activity develops many of the top-valued skills developed in the course.

### ***Why are the examples included in the course overviews important?***

People usually understand concepts better when they are shown ideas through examples rather than only told about them. The examples included in the course overviews eliminate military jargon, translating for civilian employers the unfamiliar notion of military work into one that seems more similar to civilian work.

Throughout the course overviews, the term *skills* generally refers to nontechnical skills, unless specified otherwise.

## Army Basic Combat Training

### Bottom Line

Basic Combat Training is a ten-week course designed to teach basic combat skills, such as first aid and rifle marksmanship, and to instill the following valued nontechnical skills that are directly relevant to being a good civilian worker:

- Teamwork and team-building
- Handling work stress
- Being dependable and reliable
- Interpersonal skills
- Conscientiousness and attention to detail
- Persistence.

### Course Description

Basic Combat Training is a ten-week course completed by all enlisted Army soldiers at the start of their careers in the military. They enroll in this course before enrolling in technical training, where they learn the technical skills specific to their job (for example, a mechanic would learn how to repair vehicles).

The stated course objective is to transform young and inexperienced civilians who just joined the military into confident, disciplined personnel, instilled with the attitudes the Army values most, which include placing the mission first and never accepting defeat, quitting, or leaving a comrade behind. The Army calls this conversion process *soldierization*, and it is infused into various activities designed to teach combat basics (for example, engaging an enemy with a rifle, moving under enemy fire, first aid).

Basic Combat Training is designed to be immersive, intense, and physically and mentally taxing. Fitness tests, obstacle courses, and individual and team events are implemented throughout the ten weeks. Students must persist and succeed at these activities in order to graduate, and the passing standards for each activity are intentionally set high. Training activities are scheduled for almost all waking hours of the day, seven days a week. Students are cut off from the “outside world,” with no access to phones and only very limited Internet access.

### Key Skills and Competencies Taught

#### ***Teamwork and Team-Building***

Individuals’ success in the course depends on their ability to work collaboratively with others and to do so consistently, around the clock, for ten weeks. For example, the team’s living areas must always be kept extremely neat, clean, and orderly, with every student held responsible for the slightest infraction, regardless of who may have been responsible. Students are expected to take responsibility for and pitch in to fix problems, not to blame the culprit. The overall intent is for students to learn to be supportive team members.

Many individual and group training exercises also explicitly demand teamwork for success. For example, in one exercise, groups must move together through a series of frightening obstacles that require teamwork to negotiate successfully.

### ***Handling Work Stress***

Basic Combat Training is designed to continuously stress and pressure students, because the goal is to develop soldiers who can function under the stress of combat. For example, students participate in live-fire exercises, where a mistake could result in death. In one live-fire exercise, the soldier students must crawl forward while live bullets are fired over their heads. While there are many safeguards, students are definitely aware that live bullets are passing closely overhead. The pressure on students is continuous—for example, the approximately 230 students in a typical training group have 30 minutes to retrieve and eat their meals, so even eating is designed to teach students to handle stress. To instill a mission focus, many exercises are treated as competitions in which teams are rated against each other.

### ***Being Dependable and Reliable***

All students must do their part to accomplish team tasks. No one wants to let the team down, and so each student must be dependable to the rest of the team. For example, the entire training group of 230, as well as individual students, are evaluated on their marksmanship skills. No one wants to let the team down by being the only student out of 230 not to pass their rifle examination.

### ***Interpersonal Skills***

During the ten-week training period, students' social world consists entirely of fellow students, and they must develop and display productive interpersonal skills to survive. For example, at least two students are scheduled to remain awake each night, patrolling their barracks area, watching for fires, cleaning the barracks, and monitoring whether any students attempt to leave the training area. Teams must create their own schedules, and no one wants the mid-night slot. Students, when rotating through team leader positions, must demonstrate strong interpersonal skills to ensure that those assigned the undesirable portions of the schedule feel they were treated fairly. These interpersonal skills often include an intercultural component, because the ethnic, racial, cultural, linguistic, and/or economic composition of the team is more diverse than most students have ever experienced. Basic Combat Training also includes formal instruction on subjects that are important to institutional interpersonal relations, such as preventing and responding to sexual assault and promoting equal opportunity.

### ***Persistence***

The course activities are designed to be challenging for every student. The proficiency standards are set so that they cannot be passed the first time. For example, students must be able to properly put on their chemical protective gear in eight minutes, and a great deal of practice and persistence are required to achieve this standard. Students must have or develop the discipline and time-management skills to practice until they meet the standards and to persist until they do.



### ***Conscientiousness and Attention to Detail***

Most technical and day-to-day tasks must be demonstrated to what is considered perfection. For example, students must precisely “zero their rifles” so that the sights are aligned with the strike of the bullet. Unless the rifle is properly zeroed, the student will not be able to hit enough targets to successfully pass the rifle examination, which is a graduation requirement. In another example, students moving along a trail must closely watch their assigned sector for a long time to detect any signs of an improvised explosive device (IED) positioned to kill or injure team members.

There are many day-to-day examples of the required conscientiousness and attention to detail: uniforms must be set up and worn to exacting standards, beds must be made tightly and precisely, and wall lockers must exactly follow standardized setup instructions and diagrams. In both technical and day-to-day cases, when standards are not met, students must redo the activity—under instructors’ close watch—until the standards are met.

### **Other Skills and Competencies Taught**

Skills and competencies beyond those described above emphasized in Basic Combat Training include:

- **Oral communications:** Soldier students from widely different backgrounds must effectively communicate with each other to accomplish team exercises.
- **Operating safely:** Live-fire and other exercises are inherently dangerous, and procedures and teamwork to mitigate risks are emphasized throughout the course.
- **Leading, motivating, and inspiring others to accomplish organizational goals:** Soldier students rotate through leadership positions and are responsible for leading and motivating their teams to successfully complete assigned tasks. Given the difficulty of the course for most students, supporting and inspiring other team members is critical to group success.

### **Key Training Activity**

A four-day field training exercise is the culminating course activity. The course location is moved to a simulated combat environment in which an enemy attack is possible, around the clock, for four days, so time allocated for sleeping is limited.

During the field training exercise, students must perform critical individual and collective combat tasks in a demanding and fast-paced simulated operational environment. For example, nine students might have to evacuate a wounded teammate to a safe location, and this might involve crossing an area where the enemy might be present. The wounded student must get to the safe location quickly or will die as a result of the wounds. Tasks include transporting the wounded student, administering first aid, maintaining route security, reacting to enemy fire, and identifying and neutralizing land mines. The team must quickly decide who does what, and each student must perform their tasks quickly and correctly for team success.

## Army Warrior Leader Course

### Bottom Line

The Warrior Leader Course (WLC) provides a formal complement to students' on-the-job experience, providing structured development of the ability to lead and supervise a small group of workers as a first-line supervisor. Key valued nontechnical skills developed in this course include:

- Managing and supervising the work of others
- Teamwork and team-building
- Leading, motivating, and inspiring others to accomplish organizational goals
- Training others
- Interpersonal skills
- Decisionmaking and decisiveness
- Oral communications.

Students are not expected to master these skills. Rather, the course is designed to develop in each student the skills necessary to assume small-group leadership positions, in which they will continue to develop their skills through on-the-job experience.

### Course Description

The WLC is a 22-day course that provides basic leadership training to support the transition from the follower/worker role to that of a junior noncommissioned officer, who is a small-group leader/first line supervisor. The typical WLC student has just been promoted or is about to be promoted into a team leader role in which he or she will oversee about five other soldiers. The course focuses on teaching basic leadership skills to students from all occupational specialties (including combat arms soldiers, such as infantry, and support soldiers, such as those with medical, maintenance, and administrative specialties).

The WLC is taught in a small-group environment of two instructors for every 16 students, facilitating student involvement and individual feedback. Exercises in which students engage in simulated combat-related situations and collaborative small-group (4–8) work efforts are used extensively. Students rotate through small-group leadership positions and are assessed on their leadership performance. Instructors engage each student individually to make the course as challenging as possible for each student. The low instructor-to-student ratio maximizes instructors' opportunities to provide formal and informal feedback and to otherwise mentor students and model skills.

## **Key Skills and Competencies Taught**

### ***Managing and Supervising the Work of Others***

Almost all WLC lessons teach small-group supervisory skills, either passively, through lecture and conversation, or actively, through practical application. Lectures address supervision concepts and principles. During group exercises, as rotating team leaders, students must plan and direct the team's effort to successfully complete the exercise. For example, a small group might be confronted with a simulated combat situation that requires a series of actions, and the group leader must act in a supervisory capacity to decide which actions to take first and how to deal with unexpected events (for example, having to take care of a casualty). Student group leaders also practice supervisory skills when they oversee nontraining activities, such as cleaning work areas, that require delegation, and they must ensure that delegated tasks are completed correctly and on time.

### ***Teamwork and Team-Building***

Students must effectively work as members of a team throughout the WLC, while also rotating through team leader positions. The course encourages development of teamwork and team-building by making all team members responsible for the behavior of all other team members. If a team member arrives late for an exercise, is not dressed properly in uniform, or performs poorly in an exercise, the entire team bears the consequences. This ensures that team members engage with and support each other in accomplishing team tasks and that temporary team leaders encourage team-building. During the peer-teaching lesson, students who are experienced in one area are expected to work with students who need improvement in that area so that the team as a whole succeeds.

### ***Training Others***

The course teaches training principles and techniques through lectures, and students must then conduct classes and provide individual training sessions to their fellow students as graded exercises (for example, teaching other students to disassemble, clean, and assemble a rifle). Students also learn to collectively review and analyze team performance, identify areas for improvement, and discuss how the team's performance could be improved through what is called the after-action review (AAR) process. An AAR is a performance-focused discussion of an event or exercise intended to facilitate soldier's self-discovery of how to sustain strengths and improve on weaknesses. During the course, students lead mock AARs, and instructors provide feedback.

### ***Leading, Motivating, and Inspiring Others to Accomplish Organizational Goals***

The WLC also includes opportunities for students to practice developing subordinates' skills and motivation. For example, students must prepare and conduct a graded mock developmental counseling session for a fellow student. One student role-plays the counseled soldier based on provided background information, while another student counsels. The counselee and counselor discuss performance strengths and weaknesses and develop approaches for improvement, and then the instructor evaluates the counselor's effectiveness and provides feedback. Each student conducts several counseling sessions, gaining an understanding of how to effectively counsel as well as of the importance and benefits of doing so.

While the course teaches the leading and motivating of others, the lessons do not tend to teach inspirational skills and focus more on tasks than on goals.

Finally, the course is designed to shape student's views of leadership. For example, students are taught to conduct themselves by "being the example, so others can follow."

### ***Interpersonal Skills***

Students in the WLC have a wide range of specialties, come from many different types of units, and have a wide range of experience and backgrounds. They must learn to work with people who do not share a common language and point of view. Instructors and peers evaluate students' interpersonal skills, providing each student with formal feedback on how other members of the team view the student's interpersonal skills.

### ***Decisionmaking/Decisiveness***

The WLC's practical exercises require students to continually make quick and decisive choices. In team leader roles, students practice giving orders and making and implementing decisions with confidence and authority—for example, regarding the exercises to be included in morning physical fitness sessions. Students also practice decisionmaking during the key developmental activity, described below.

### ***Oral Communication***

Throughout the course, students must express their ideas during classroom discussions and role-playing exercises. Each student must also research, prepare, and present a formal briefing on a significant military topic (for example, the role of the noncommissioned officer during World War II). Students are formally evaluated and critiqued on their participation in classroom discussions, role-playing, and formal briefings.

## **Other Skills and Competencies Taught**

Skills and competencies beyond those described above emphasized in this course include:

- **Written communications:** Several short, graded written assignments require correct grammar, clarity, completeness, and conciseness.
- **Planning** skills are required for success on individual and collective exercises (for example, students must plan for the developmental counseling session and describe the plan to the instructor).
- **Conscientiousness and attention to detail** are required throughout the course. For example, morning physical fitness training must align to prescribed standards, and student leaders are evaluated on how well other students follow their standards.
- **Being dependable and reliable:** The training schedules are demanding, and students must arrive precisely on time and in exactly the right uniform throughout the course.
- **Operating safely:** The course teaches students to identify safety risks and develop plans to mitigate these risks. The course outlines risk-mitigation actions for every activity.

## **Key Developmental Activity**

The 36-hour field training exercise culminating activity provides students the opportunity to practice the key skills taught throughout the course and receive a leadership ability evaluation. Students organize into teams of five, led by a rotating student leader who is responsible for directing two teams. The teams and their rotating leaders prepare for and conduct a series of short, simple simulated combat missions, such as an attack of an enemy machine gun position or moving between two locations where there is a chance of an ambush.

Student leaders must develop a feasible plan to accomplish the mission, issue an order that clearly and completely communicates the plan, supervise preparations, and ensure that team members understand the plan and their role in it. Student leaders must also direct the actions and reactions of the team while executing the mission and conduct AARs of the team's performance at the end of each mission. Team members must work together effectively for mission success. Each student receives grades and counseling on his or her leadership performance.

## Army Advanced Leader Course

### The Advanced Leader Course Differs by Occupational Specialty

All Army personnel take a version of the Advanced Leader Course (ALC) as midgrade non-commissioned officers (NCOs). NCOs are enlisted members, such as corporals, sergeants, or petty officers, who have a rank that gives them leadership over other enlisted personnel. The specific content and emphasis of the ALC may differ by occupational specialty—that is, by job, job grouping, or occupational branch. This course overview uses as an example the ALC for indirect fire infantrymen. That occupation involves operating a mortar—a weapon that fires explosive rounds at relatively short ranges and with high-arc ballistic trajectories. To determine the generalizability of the skills taught in this course, we talked to instructors who teach versions of the course to all armor and infantry personnel. We determined that all but one of the skills described below can be generalized to other versions of the course. Veterans in infantry and armor jobs make up a substantial proportion of the total of transitioning veterans.

### Bottom Line

The ALC supports the development of many important valued nontechnical skills; key among these are the following:

- Teamwork and team-building
- Supervising the work of others
- Oral communications
- Conscientiousness and attention to detail (may not be as highly emphasized in other versions of the ALC).

While these skills are emphasized in the context of the indirect fire infantrymen course, in particular, and in comparable courses for armor and infantry occupations more generally, each of these skills is also required of civilian supervisors.

### Course Description

The Indirect Fire Infantryman ALC is a six-week course designed to build on the skills developed during previous assignments and schooling by NCOs, including sergeants (E-5s) who have been selected for promotion and staff sergeants (E-6s).

The goal of the Indirect Fire Infantryman ALC is to further develop key skills necessary to perform in leadership positions in mortar sections and platoons. Although there are variations, a mortar section normally has two mortars and 6–8 soldiers, and a mortar platoon generally has four mortars, almost 30 soldiers, and a fire direction center (FDC). An FDC receives requests for mortar fire and computes the data (elevation, direction, and propellant) needed for mortar crews to lay (aim) and fire their mortar tubes so as to hit the target.

The Indirect Fire Infantryman ALC offers some lessons that teach general subjects (for example, preventing sexual harassment in the workplace, being resilient) and administrative subjects (for example, property accountability/supply management) and introduces some skills students need to serve as mortar platoon sergeants. But the course's primary focus is to develop combat-related planning and execution skills in mortar section leaders. The course presents concepts and techniques for conducting many important types of operations (for example, conducting a patrol, selecting locations for positioning the mortars where they can best support an infantry attack) and technical mortar functions (for example, calculating firing data, laying [aiming] the mortar). After these concepts and techniques are presented, the course uses practical exercises in the classroom, in simulations, and in the field, where student teams plan and execute these combat missions.

The course is taught in a small-group environment (one instructor for 16 students), which helps facilitate student involvement and individual feedback. Peer teaching is done after the first week, so each student has to prepare and conduct at least two classes. Practical exercises and collaborative planning efforts of small groups (2–8) are used extensively to enhance interaction and learning outcomes. The low instructor-to-student ratio enhances the ability of the instructor to provide formal and informal feedback, promote meaningful discussion, and act as a teacher and facilitator during these exercises and during the course.

## **Key Skills and Competencies Taught**

### ***Teamwork and Team-Building***

Student groups conduct most of the practical and field training exercises, and students rotate as student group leaders. The students come from different units, and group members must quickly bond and cooperate to become effective teams. The student groups are given limited time to complete their exercises. This requires students to work together as an effective team, and the student leaders must effectively manage and supervise the team's collaborative efforts (for example, developing a mortar target list).

### ***Managing and Supervising the Work of Others***

Being able to manage and supervise others is a skill set that students assigned to the group leadership positions described above need for success in these exercises. Given the amount of precision needed to successfully and safely engage targets with mortar fire, there is a need for oversight and checking.

Additionally, students are organized into student organizations (such as platoons and squads), and students are rotated through leadership positions with responsibility for nonlesson activities, such as leading morning physical fitness training, ensuring that student training schedules are met, and ensuring that students arrive at training with the right equipment and in the right uniform.

### ***Oral Communication***

Almost all lessons require the students to clearly express their ideas, and students are evaluated based on the substance and clarity of their presentations, including at least one formal briefing.



Effective two-way communication is required to promote the discussions needed for effective collaborative planning. Also, after the first week, the students teach the classes, so each student is the instructor/facilitator for several lessons, which helps them develop presentation and two-way communication skills.

### ***Conscientiousness and Attention to Detail***

A major portion of the course is devoted to learning and practicing the tasks and procedures necessary to gather data to aim a mortar tube so that, when the mortar is fired, the round will hit a precise point on the ground (this involves, for example, maintaining communications with the observer and placing the location of the observer and the target into the computer). The crew must lay and fire the mortar exactly in accordance with the data, and the standards that must be achieved require that these actions must be performed quickly and correctly. To graduate from the course, the students must pass tests and perform successfully during practical and field training exercises; these activities require a high level of precision and great attention to detail in following procedures.

### **Other Skills and Competencies Taught**

The Indirect Fire Infantryman ALC also teaches some other valued nontechnical skills:

- **Operating safely:** The students are taught how to analyze operational and training events, identify the risks associated with these events, and plan mitigation actions. At the beginning of each training event, safety risks and mitigation actions are outlined. All training is conducted with a heavy emphasis on safety.
- **Training others:** In addition to being taught training and leader development concepts and taking part in numerous training exercises (see the key developmental activity, on the next page), each student is assigned small-group instructor responsibilities for several lessons, and the student's performance is graded. Though the students are provided with lesson plans and supporting material, students still need to do considerable research to prepare for the lessons and presentation, and teaching skills are necessary to conduct the classes. Students are taught to collectively review, discuss, and analyze team performance; identify areas for improvement; and discuss how the team's performance could be improved through the after-action review (AAR) process. An AAR is a performance-focused discussion of an event or exercise that enables soldiers to discover for themselves how to sustain strengths and improve on weaknesses. As with other skills developed during the Indirect Fire Infantryman ALC, the small-group instructors provide feedback and support.
- **Interpersonal skills:** Given the requirement to be an effective member, and frequently a leader, of a newly formed team that must successfully perform numerous practical exercises, interpersonal skills are key to course success. Students are evaluated not only by the small-group instructor but also by a system of peer reviews, to give each student formal feedback on how other members of the team see the student's leadership and interpersonal skills.
- **Written communications:** Students are taught how to write clearly and concisely, and they must successfully complete a short writing assignment.



## Key Developmental Activity

A five-day field training exercise is the culminating activity that provides students with the opportunity to exercise the key skills taught in the course and to successfully accomplish both leadership and mortar tasks and skills that are graduation requirements. Students organize into a mortar platoon, with one student assigned as platoon leader and one as platoon sergeant. Other students are assigned as FDC and mortar section leaders, and still others are responsible for administratively running the range. Part of the exercise involves having the platoon support an infantry platoon conducting a tactical mission (such as attacking a defending enemy position). The platoon must move and set up positions that allow it to be able to engage the enemy whenever needed, thus requiring close coordination with the attacking platoon and effective decisionmaking. A second part of the exercise is a live-fire exercise, in which the platoon's mortars must hit assigned targets accurately and quickly. The third part requires the platoon to recover after the field exercise—performing after-operations cleaning and maintenance and ensuring that all equipment is accounted for and returned to its proper location.

Students rotate through the leader and other section positions. Each student gets at least one chance to act in a leadership role. The rotating student leaders must develop feasible plans to accomplish the mission, issue orders that clearly and completely communicate the plan, supervise preparations, ensure that team members understand the plan and their role in it, and direct actions during execution of the mission. At the end of each mission segment, the students participate in an AAR. The student platoon members must work together effectively for mission success, and each leader is graded and counseled on his leadership performance.

## Army Senior Leader Course

### Senior Leader Course Applies to Infantry and Armor

Army noncommissioned officers (NCOs) take a version of the Senior Leader Course as they progress in rank to more senior levels. NCOs are enlisted members, such as corporals, sergeants, or petty officers, who have a rank that gives them leadership over other enlisted personnel. Course content and emphasis may differ by job or by job grouping (that is, by occupational branch). Here, we report on versions of the Senior Leader Course that relate to armor and infantry jobs. Veterans in armor and infantry jobs make up a substantial proportion of the total of transitioning veterans.

### Bottom Line

The Maneuver Senior Leader Course (MSLC) supports the development of many important skills, and key among these are seven valued nontechnical skills from the list given in the introduction to this toolkit:

- Planning
- Decisionmaking
- Teamwork and team-building
- Managing and supervising the work of others
- Critical thinking and problem-solving
- Oral communications
- Training others.

While these skills are developed mainly in context of combat operations, the thought processes, systematic approaches, and teamwork and team-building skills developed can transfer to performing civilian-sector planning, management training, problem-solving, and supervision functions.

### Course Description

The MSLC is a seven-week course designed to build on the skills gained by experienced midgrade NCOs—staff sergeants (E-6) who have been selected for promotion and sergeants first class (E-7)—during previous assignments and schooling. The goal of the MSLC is to further develop key skills necessary to perform in leadership positions (platoon sergeant/acting platoon leader) in tank, infantry, scout, and mortar platoons. A maneuver platoon is a small organization (20–40 personnel) organized into some combination of sections, squads, and/or teams, all led by subordinate leaders.

The MSLC has some lessons that teach general subjects and procedures (such as building Army family teams) and administrative ones (such as property accountability/supply management) and introduces some skills necessary to serve as a company's first sergeant (a company consists

of up to 100 soldiers, and the first sergeant is the company's senior NCO leader). But the course's primary focus is to develop combat-related planning and execution skills. Concepts and techniques for conducting many important types of operations (such as a dismounted platoon attack) are presented, and these are followed by practical exercises in the classroom, in simulators or simulations, and in the field, during which student teams plan and execute these combat missions.

The course is taught in a small-group environment (one instructor for 16 students), which helps facilitate student involvement and individual feedback. Peer teaching is done after the first week, so each student has to prepare and conduct at least two classes. Practical exercises and collaborative planning efforts of small groups (2–8) are used extensively to enhance interaction and learning outcomes. The relatively low instructor-to-student ratio enhances the ability of the instructor to provide formal and informal feedback, promote meaningful discussion, and act as a teacher and facilitator during these exercises and during the course.

## **Key Skills and Competencies Taught**

### ***Planning, Decisionmaking, and Problem Solving***

The central focus of the course is developing the leader skills needed to plan and execute a range of different types of operational combat missions. In numerous exercises, the students are given a specific military situation (including such information as friendly and enemy strength, locations, disposition, and terrain) and a mission to accomplish (for example, "Your platoon will attack at 0600 and capture Hill 876 in order to allow B Company to advance"). The students must develop plans and make decisions that would result in successful mission outcomes. Thus, these planning exercises are actually problem-solving exercises that require critical thinking (developing and analyzing feasible options or "courses of action") and decisionmaking (selecting the best option).

The students are taught several processes that provide structured, systematic approaches for accomplishing these functions and promote the development of these skills. In discussions facilitated by the small-group instructor, students assess in detail the strengths and weakness of the plans and decisions and develop alternatives. Often, the time available for planning and decisionmaking is limited. While the planning and decisionmaking are exercised in a military situational context, the specific situations are varied and often complex, and the thought processes and approaches developed by these exercises have broad applicability to civilian settings.

### ***Managing and Supervising the Work of Others***

Being able to manage and supervise others is a skill set that students assigned in the planning group leadership positions described above need. In many exercises, student groups and their leaders must execute their plans by walking through execution on a terrain board, on which the students move pieces representing friendly forces, and the instructor (or another student group) moves and takes the actions of enemy forces. In these exercises, the student leaders must assess the effects of unforeseen enemy activities or situational changes (for example, the trees the platoon leader had planned to use for cover are not there) on the plan and then decide and

direct the appropriate reactions. Thus, these exercises develop quick decisionmaking skills and skills involved in managing and supervising others in a dynamic situation.

Mission execution exercises are also conducted in simulations (where the operation is executed on a computer program), simulators (where the students leaders command and control the operation from a tank or infantry fighting or reconnaissance vehicle simulator), and in the field (where the students are organized into platoons and execute tactical missions on actual terrain).

### ***Teamwork and Team-Building***

Most of these planning and problem-solving exercises are done by student groups, and students are rotated as student group leaders. The student groups are given limited time to develop their plans. This requires students to work together as an effective planning team, and the student leaders must effectively manage and supervise the team's collaborative efforts.

### ***Critical Thinking***

All the planning exercises require the students to apply critical thinking skills, and some of the problems are quite complex, with no obvious or fully correct solutions. Some lessons feature difficult leadership situations—for example, the unit is in a major training exercise preparing for deployment to Afghanistan, and a key subordinate has a family emergency—requiring students to develop and discuss various feasible solutions. Moreover, the small-group instructors are trained to implement the Army Learning Model, which involves instructional techniques designed to facilitate thoughtful dialogue and interaction as a way to develop student adaptability and critical thinking skills.

### ***Oral Communication***

Almost all lessons require the students to clearly express their ideas, and, in many cases, students are evaluated based on the substance and clarity of their presentation. Additionally, each student must present, and be graded on, numerous formal and informal briefings and presentations. Effective two-way communication is required to promote the discussions needed for effective collaborative planning. Also, as outlined above, after the first week the students teach the classes, so each student is the instructor/facilitator for several lessons, something that exercises presentation and two-way communication skills.

### ***Training Others***

Each student is assigned small-group instructor responsibilities for several lessons, and the student's performance is graded. While the students are provided with lesson plans and supporting material, considerable research is necessary to prepare for the lessons and presentation, and teaching skills are necessary to conduct the classes. As with other skills developed during MSLC, the instructors provide feedback and support.

## Other Skills and Competencies Taught

The MSLC also teaches some other valued nontechnical skills:

- **Written communications:** Students are taught and tested on their understanding of writing fundamentals and are required to write a “personal experience monograph,” which must be done to standard as a graduation requirement. Additionally, there are many requirements to write planning products (such as a course of action for accomplishing a tactical mission), and these must be clear and concise.
- **Conscientiousness and attention to detail:** Many of the planning and administrative documents (for example, five-paragraph operations order, duty rosters) have prescribed formats and content requirements that the student must meet to pass the lesson.

## Key Developmental Activity

The five-day field training exercise is the culminating activity that provides students with the opportunity to practice the key skills taught in the course. The class (typically around 180 students) is divided into two groups: One group goes to the field, and one trains in a virtual trainer—the Close Combat Tactical Trainer—that has tank and infantry fighting vehicle simulators. The simulators have crew positions, in which students must function as actual crews would, and the simulator acts as an actual vehicle would.

Students organize into platoons, and one student is assigned as platoon leader and one as platoon sergeant. Students rotate through leader position, and each student gets at least one chance to act in a leadership role. The platoon and its rotating leaders prepare for and conduct a series of short, simple simulated combat missions, such as a platoon attack on a moving enemy tank platoon. Student leaders must develop a feasible plan to accomplish the mission, issue an order that clearly and completely communicates the plan, supervise preparations, ensure that team members understand the plan and their role in it, and direct the actions and reactions of the platoon during execution of the mission. The student platoon members must work together effectively for mission success, and each leader is graded and counseled on his leadership performance.

## Marine Corps Corporals Course

### Bottom Line

The Corporals Course prepares marines to transition from subordinates to junior leaders. The course accomplishes this by building three valued nontechnical skills:

- Critical thinking
- Teamwork and team-building
- Leading, motivating, and inspiring.

### Course Description

This is a three-week long course given to newly promoted corporals each year. These corporals have 2–4 years of military experience and are preparing to assume intermediate leadership positions where they will typically lead and manage 3–4 subordinate marines. The students are drawn from all the Marine Corps' combat, support, and aviation occupational specialties.

The course is divided into three instructional blocks:

- **Administration and communication:** Students learn about the Marine Corps' performance evaluation and promotion system and about professional communications.
- **Leadership:** Students are introduced to the role of the Marine Corps' heritage as a source of motivation and inspiration, the philosophy of combat conditioning, and how to deal with combat-related stress.
- **Warfighting:** Students are given refresher training on Marine Corps offensive and defensive operations, tactical communications, and land navigation and are also introduced to the way the Marine Corps organizes its forces.

Students learn about these subjects through a combination of lectures, practical application sessions, coaching sessions, and guided discussions. Homework is assigned for some subjects.

### Key Skills and Competencies Taught

#### *Critical Thinking*

The Corporals Course challenges its students to consider their thought processes and decisions. The course uses the Socratic method—an approach in which the teacher asks a series of questions instead of giving students information directly, forcing students either to get to the desired knowledge by answering the questions or to become more aware of the limits of their knowledge, or both. The goal is to help the students begin to consider the impact of their actions and decisions as junior leaders. Students are presented with disciplinary case studies, ethical dilemmas, and other ambiguous situations they might encounter in their jobs and asked to publicly explain their decisions to their peers and instructors. The group and the instructors then debate and discuss the decisions. Because the course emphasizes these critical

thinking skills in the context of the students' normal jobs, this constitutes only a first step in developing the students' critical thinking skills.

One example of this method of instruction is the social media class. Instructors stated that the class begins with a lecture on the Marine Corps' policy on social media. Students are then broken up into discussion groups moderated by instructors. The instructors present questionable social media posts and ask the students whether they think the given post is within Marine Corps' policy. Students are asked to argue their positions. Instructors occasionally probe students' arguments to help the students gain a greater understanding of their own positions and thought processes.

### ***Teamwork and Team-Building***

Because of how the Corporals Course is designed and because of the composition of the students in it, the course encourages teamwork and team-building skills. Students are drawn from all different occupational specialties in the Marine Corps, which forces students to interact with other students from different communities, each of which has its own distinct way of working. As a result, students must learn to accommodate each other's tendencies and proclivities and rely on each other's different strengths during group assignments. Also, instructors regularly reassign students to different groups, forcing them to constantly adapt and rebuild teams. These teamwork and team-building skills are taught through this indirect method rather than formally.

One example of teamwork is in the land navigation practical exercise. Students are broken up into teams and given maps, compasses, plotting tools, and a set of coordinates to find. Students must write down a code printed on a box placed at each coordinate to verify that they have successfully navigated to the coordinate. Students must work in teams to plot out a course and to keep track of direction and distance while on the course. To do so, students draw on each other's different skills to accomplish the mission—for example, one student may be better at accurately calculating magnetic azimuths and pace counts, while another student may be more adept at keeping the compass steady as the team walks. The course must be completed before a certain time, thus adding an element of stress to the team environment.

### ***Leading, Motivating, and Inspiring***

The Corporals Course introduces students to the use of organizational values, culture, and traditions as a way to motivate and inspire their subordinates. While students enter the Corporals Course already familiar with these values, culture, and traditions, the course presents in-depth examinations of historical events and traditions and how they can be used to inspire and motivate subordinates by linking them to the organization.

For instance, students are taught about the historical role of noncommissioned officers (NCOs)—enlisted members, such as corporals, sergeants, or petty officers, who have a rank that gives them leadership over other enlisted personnel. Students are presented with case studies of Marine Corps NCOs exhibiting desirable behavior, often during combat situations. Some case studies involve NCOs who sacrificed themselves to save their units in combat. Other case studies involve NCOs who took decisive actions to keep their units from being destroyed. These stories are historical case studies that instructors say are used to instill a desire



to lead and motivate the students' subordinates when the students return to their normal duties after the course is over.

## Other Skills and Competencies Taught

Based on a review of the course lessons and discussion with instructors, the following other skills and competencies are also taught:

- **Continuous learning** is often encouraged by instructors in the context of their own career progression. Course instructors stated that they encourage students to seek more knowledge beyond the curriculum. And instructors ensure that students are given access to course instructional materials, PowerPoint presentations, and reference material to facilitate continuous learning. Instructors also encourage students to seek out off-duty education opportunities, such as college classes.
- **Training others:** Students in the Corporals Course are required to learn how to train others by learning how to conduct short, informal classes on simple topics (for example, how to calculate azimuths on a map, how to program a radio to send encrypted messages). Students are given a subject and a short time to prepare, and they are expected to refrain from using notes. Instructors also state that classes are taught using alternative teaching methods (such as the Bob Pike training method, which has students participating more in their own learning—see the Bob Pike Group's website, <http://www.bobpikegroup.com/About/Overview>), and students are encouraged to emulate those methods when they return to their units.
- **Oral communication:** Finally, instructors note that students learn oral communication as a matter of course. Students are not formally evaluated on public speaking skills, but the nature of the curriculum and assignments given in the Corporals Course is such that students are forced to articulate their thoughts. Guided discussions, required presentations to a group on assigned topics (as described above), and other venues give each student the opportunity to speak publicly on professional topics. Students receive formal classes on oral communication in later courses.

## Key Training Event: Foundations of Marine Corps Leadership

The multi-unit Foundations of Marine Corps Leadership course module encompasses many of the key and additional skills taught in the Corporals Course. Students are presented with policies, traditions, and ideas that underpin the organization's concept of what it expects from its leaders at all levels. Students explore these ideas extensively in group discussions, where instructors challenge students to think deeply about how the concepts should be applied to their day-to-day jobs. Students present their ideas orally and respond to questions, debate, and comments in a professional, moderated forum.



## Marine Corps Sergeants Course

### Bottom Line

The Sergeants Course builds on leadership skills that were introduced in the Corporals Course so that students are able to assume greater positions of responsibility. The course accomplishes this by developing students' skills in

- Decisionmaking/decisiveness
- Critical thinking
- Oral communication
- Written communication
- Leading, motivating, and inspiring others
- Training others.

### Course Description

This is a roughly seven-week course that is given to sergeants of all military occupational specialties in the Marine Corps. Students typically have served 3–6 years in the Marine Corps, have typically led teams of 4–6 subordinates in their previous jobs, and are now preparing to lead teams of 13–15 subordinates.

The course is divided into three instructional blocks:

- **Administration and communication:** Students develop their oral and written communications skills, build on their knowledge of Marine Corps administrative procedures and the performance evaluation system, improve their interpersonal communications skills, and are coached on how to interact with the media.
- **Leadership:** Students build on leadership skills learned in the Corporals Course. Students continue to study the Marine Corps' history and how it is used as a motivational tool.
- **Warfighting:** Students are given refresher training on Marine Corps' offensive and defensive operations. Students are also introduced to the Marine Corps' method of planning military operations.

Students learn about these subjects through a combination of lectures, practical application sessions, coaching sessions, and guided discussions. Homework is assigned for some subjects.

### Key Skills and Competencies Taught

#### *Decisionmaking/Decisiveness*

Students are required to apply decisionmaking skills (sometimes under time pressure and under uncertainty) in a variety of venues. For example, students are presented with tabletop decision games involving a scenario featuring incomplete information and asked to form a plan of action within a given time.

One such scenario is as follows: A 13-person unit encounters a mob of looters during a patrol through a recently surrendered city. The unit's orders are to avoid interfering with local law enforcement routines unless its own safety is threatened. As the students evaluate the situation, they are then told that one of the people in their unit attempts to stop some of the looters by firing shots into the air, despite knowing that he is to avoid interfering. Students are then given a few moments to decide what to do, and one will be called on to present his or her idea to the class.

The instructors critique the student's course of action and ask why the student chose one decision over another, or what they were most concerned about in their decisionmaking process. The purpose is to help the students consciously understand their own decisionmaking processes and the biases they have, to make them more self-aware.

### ***Critical Thinking***

The Sergeants Course uses small-discussion groups and the Socratic method to develop students' critical thinking skills. The Socratic method is an approach in which the teacher asks a series of questions instead of giving students information directly, forcing students to either get to the desired knowledge by answering the questions or become more aware of the limits of their knowledge, or both. Students must explain their thought processes and judgments during decision games and field problems. Game scenarios often feature complex problems and incomplete information. Instructors noted that students are also presented with hypothetical ethical dilemmas and asked to decide on a course of action in a small-discussion-group setting. Students are encouraged to debate, consider, and reconsider their positions during group discussions.

For instance, instructors will present a scenario in which the student is put in charge of running his or her unit's annual physical fitness test. Test scores factor into promotion decisions, and failing scores often spell the end of a career. Students are asked to think about a friend they were promoted ahead of. The students are told that, after the test is complete, the friend comes up to the student and tells him or her that he did not pass and asks the student to do him a favor and change his score before the student reports the scores.

Instructors state that, at this point, one student is called on to present his or her response to the hypothetical friend. The student is asked to explain his or her thinking, how emotions and feelings of loyalty affected his or her decision, and other questions that enable the student and his or her classmates to think critically about complex issues.

### ***Oral Communication***

The Sergeants Course builds on the oral communication skills first introduced in Corporals Course by using both evaluated and informal events to provide structured opportunities for students to practice public speaking. Students must give extemporaneous speeches without preparation and write and deliver speeches using visual aids. Prepared speeches are evaluated and critiqued for content, coherence, delivery, the ability to answer audience questions, and other factors. Finally, transitions between speakers in group speeches are practiced and evaluated.

Although a prepared speech is an evaluated training event in the Sergeants Course, instructors commented that small-group discussions are some of the most important venues for students to improve their oral communications skills. The Socratic method used by instructors to prod and coax students (such as in the tactical and ethical decision games described above) requires students to quickly and clearly articulate their thoughts.

### ***Written Communication***

The Sergeants Course continues to build on the written communication skills learned in Corporals Course by requiring students to compose longer and more complex written analytical essays, which are critiqued and refined over several iterations during the course. The course also teaches students to navigate the organization's official correspondence system of written orders for military operations, as well as administrative memos, evaluations, and other forms of written communication. Students are thus exposed to a range of writing styles and purposes.

The main example of this skill cited by instructors was the analytical essays that students must write. Students are given a topic to write about and are given deadlines to write first drafts, rewrites, and final drafts. Instructors read all drafts and comment on everything from content, layout, and grammar to the use of headings and subheadings. All student analytical essays receive substantial attention.

### ***Leading, Motivating, and Inspiring Others***

The Sergeants Course exposes students to the organizational culture of the Marine Corps and how to make that culture relevant to their subordinates in a way that motivates and inspires them. Case histories of key events in the Marine Corps are examined and discussed in small groups. Furthermore, students are expected to reflect on their place in the organization during group discussions and in written journal entries.

Instructors were unanimous in citing the peer leadership environment of the course as an example of this skill. Instructors observed that, normally, students' ranks play a role in how well they can lead their subordinates. Students do not normally have to rely fully on their persuasive skills. But during the course, students (who are all of the same rank) must rely fully on their ability to gain buy-in from their fellow students to accomplish any task.

### ***Training Others***

Course materials state that the Sergeants Course familiarizes students with the Marine Corps' method of developing long-range, annual, and quarterly training plans in lectures, but instructors noted that students do not do any practical application. However, the course does teach students how to provide constructive input and feedback to subordinates during training and then encourages students to do so for one another throughout the course, during moderated after-action reviews (AARs). (An AAR is a performance-focused discussion of an event or exercise intended to facilitate marine's self-discovery of how to sustain strengths and improve on weaknesses.)

## **Key Training Event: Small-Unit Leader Exercise**

Many of the key skills and competencies taught in the Sergeants Course are encapsulated in a two-day field exercise called the Small-Unit Leader Exercise, in which the students take turns acting as the unit's leader. During each rotation, the leader is given a problem to solve, 15 minutes to develop and communicate a plan to the rest of the unit, and 45 minutes to carry out the plan. Problems may range from distinctly military ones, such as ambushing an enemy unit, to more generic ones, such as figuring out how to move people and equipment across an obstacle. Students are expected to use the military's method for developing quick, improvisational plans, communicate their plans clearly and confidently to their fellow students, and display good judgment, initiative, and ingenuity throughout the exercise.

## Marine Corps Career Course

### Bottom Line

The Career Course refines existing valued skills already learned in previous courses and prepares students to advise and assist officers in planning and implementing projects and operations. The course does this by developing these valued nontechnical skills:

- Decisionmaking/decisiveness
- Critical thinking
- Oral and written communication
- Leading, motivating, and inspiring others.

### Course Description

This is a roughly seven-week course that is open to staff sergeants of all military occupational specialties in the Marine Corps. Students have typically served 4–10 years in the Marine Corps, have typically led teams of 13–15 subordinates in their previous jobs, and are now preparing to assist officers in leading organizations of up to 40–60 subordinates.

The course is divided into four instructional blocks:

- **Administration and communication:** Students are taught how to conduct investigative inquiries and are given further instruction on how to write military correspondence and position papers and to further develop their briefing and media interaction skills.
- **Leadership:** Students are given additional instruction on how to manage stress control and weight control programs, are given additional training on organizational ethics, and are introduced to the Marine Corps' concept of values-based leadership.
- **Warfighting:** Students are introduced to the Marine Corp's problem-solving process and are given more classes to familiarize them with the types of operations a platoon of 30–40 subordinates is supposed to be able to do.
- **Training:** Students are introduced to the Marine Corps' process of developing and continuously improving training curriculum.

Students learn about these subjects through a combination of lectures, practical application sessions, coaching sessions, and guided discussions. Homework is assigned for some subjects.

### Key Skills and Competencies Taught

#### *Decisionmaking/Decisiveness*

Students continue to develop the decisionmaking skills learned through on-the-job training and in previous professional military education (PME) courses by participating in group discussions on decisionmaking. The discussions include ethical dilemmas, in which students are presented with a morally ambiguous situation and asked to discuss how they would respond. Other venues for practicing decisionmaking include tabletop decisionmaking games, in which

students make decisions under time pressure and incomplete information. Finally, students are given case studies on various military decisions and participate in guided discussions in which they dissect the circumstances and the decisions made by commanders in those case studies.

Students study the art of decisionmaking by reviewing the decisions that led to the “Lance Corporal Rother incident.” This incident occurred in 1988, when a series of hasty decisions during a training exercise resulted in a Marine Corps unit accidentally leaving one of its marines behind to die in the harsh California desert. Students are given a chance to read the inquiry report and then discuss the incident in moderated discussion groups. Students are asked by instructors to reflect on the factors that played into the leaders’ hasty decisionmaking. Students are also asked to reflect on how such an incident might have unfolded in their unit. Instructors stated that consciously thinking about how others have made bad decisions helps students understand the root causes of bad decisionmaking.

### ***Critical Thinking***

The Career Course develops the critical thinking skills of its students by challenging students to come up with creative solutions to challenging situations in many contexts. Answers are discussed and debated in groups.

One example cited by instructors is when students are called on to discuss whether they would immediately report a missing weapon (which is a serious issue) to their unit commander or whether they would attempt to find it themselves first. Other situations may involve real-life events that took place in Iraq or Afghanistan. Group discussion and debate require students to fully develop their ideas and understand their own thought processes, much as the above example of the Lance Corporal Rother incident is intended to do.

### ***Oral and Written Communication***

The Career Course continues to build on the written communication skills learned in the Corporals Course and Sergeants Course by continuing to require students to write analytical essays that instructors critique. Students are also introduced to Marine Corps administrative correspondence by having to write award recommendations, position papers, and other official correspondence.

Students practice their oral communication skills constantly during the Career Course. Students conduct mock interviews with news media role-players to get them used to speaking cogently while on camera. Group presentations emphasize smooth transitions between briefers.

One example of both skills cited by instructors was the evaluated confirmation brief. A confirmation brief is a proposed plan for a mission that is presented to a commander for approval, or confirmation. In the Career Course, students are given a scenario and are tasked with writing and delivering a confirmation brief. Students are allowed time to write up their brief and then practice giving it. During the examination, student teams present their plans to the instructors, who are acting as their commanders. Instructors stated that they emphasize smooth transitions between presenters on the same team.

### ***Leading, Motivating, and Inspiring Others***

Students learn to lead, motivate, and inspire others through the peer leadership required to accomplish tasks and assignments and solve problems while in the course. All students are placed in charge of a training event, and Career Course instructors constantly reshuffle teams to force students to build rapport with new individuals, who are often from other military occupational specialties. This peer leadership is particularly important at this stage in the student's career because he or she has most likely gotten used to leading subordinates who have innate respect for the student's rank. Requiring students to consciously use their abilities to motivate and inspire team members to accomplish the task at hand is essential to developing their ability to lead.

Physical training is one example that instructors cited as an event where this skill is practiced. Physical training strips away the privileges of rank and requires all students to work together equally. Instructors stated that students work out almost daily with their classmates and that instructors constantly devise contests to stoke competition.

### **Other Skills and Competencies Taught**

After a review of the course materials and discussion with the instructors, we have determined that one other high-value nontechnical skill—**continuous learning**—was taught. Instructors stated that they constantly point out the need for students to build on the knowledge learned in the Career Course, much as students did in previous courses. Instructors also stated that they facilitate continuous learning by making course curriculum materials (such as presentation slides and handouts) available to students who want to pass the knowledge learned in the Career Course to the subordinates in their units.

### **Key Training Event: Orders-Writing Process**

The orders-writing process is a planning process students become familiar with during the Career Course. The orders-writing process requires students to demonstrate the critical thinking and good written communication they have learned over a series of classes. Instructors state that the orders-writing process is often unfamiliar to most students and is considered to be a challenging training event, given the complexity of the process and the thoroughness required.

The process begins when students are given a military scenario that must be evaluated—the first step in the orders-writing process. Students must carefully gauge the enemy they are facing, the resources (troops, time, materiel, etc.) they have available, and environmental effects (for example, weather and the availability of daylight or moonlight).

Once students complete the evaluation process, they must formulate a plan and write it clearly and concisely. The plan must be aligned with the resources available; this requires students to work through a prescribed set of considerations, such as articulating the effects the unit is expected to achieve, the plan for moving troops in and out of the area where the operation takes place, radio frequencies, plans for reorganizing troops that become separated from their

units, and other minute but important factors. Students also must adhere to strict word definitions (for example, using the word “destroy” means troops are expected to incapacitate 30 percent or more of the enemy’s troops and equipment). The written order that results requires significant critical thinking and good writing to ensure the plan is thorough and can be successfully conveyed to large numbers of subordinates.



## Marine Corps Advanced Course

### Bottom Line

The Advanced Course extends and focuses the skills of gunnery sergeants to prepare them to serve as strategic-level advisors to leaders of medium-size (200+ personnel) organizations. The Advanced Course does this by focusing on the following valued nontechnical skills:

- Decisionmaking/decisiveness
- Training others.

### Course Description

The Advanced Course is a roughly seven-week course that is given to gunnery sergeants in the Marine Corps who have approximately 12 years of experience. Instructors noted that, in addition to building on existing skills already taught in previous courses, the course takes advantage of the significant on-the-job experience the students themselves have accumulated to teach new skills.

The course is divided into four instructional blocks:

- **Communication and administration:** Students build their knowledge of military justice procedures by learning to conduct formal investigations, how to supervise a lawful search and seizure, and other military justice topics that relate to their ability to advise and assist commanders.
- **Leadership:** Students continue to examine ethical and leadership dilemmas, as in previous courses, and also learn how to help commanders develop strategic guidance for their units.
- **Warfighting:** Students learn about the Marine Corps' process for finding solutions to unstructured problems. Additionally, students build on their knowledge of the Marine Corps' role in operations with other military services.
- **Training:** Students learn about the Marine Corps' method for developing an annual unit training plan.

### Key Skills and Competencies Taught

#### *Decisionmaking/Decisiveness*

Students build on previous training in decisionmaking by developing their ability to develop the situational awareness and the synthesis of ideas and information to enable higher-level officers to make sound decisions. Students are also given the skills necessary to help them triage and organize information for presentation to their commanders, who are the ultimate decisionmakers. Although students do not learn any new skills to make their own decisions, it is expected that they already possess the abilities to do so.

The series of classes on the Marine Corps' Planning Process is one example of decisiveness and decisionmaking cited by instructors. Teams of students are given a tactical scenario and a

mission (for example, pushing an enemy force out of a city while minimizing civilian casualties). Students must come up with different courses of action to achieve the mission. Students then test out the different courses of action through wargaming and work through the results as a group before deciding on the course of action to take. This process teaches students to deliberately and methodically make effective high-level decisions that can affect the entire organization.

### ***Training Others***

The Advanced Course teaches students to manage the training program of a medium-size organization (200+ personnel). Students are taught how to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the organization's current ability to carry out its mission. Students then design a training plan that allows the organization to meet the leader's goals and strategic vision. Finally, students are taught how to evaluate the effectiveness of the training plan they put together, to ensure that it does what is intended.

One example of how this skill is applied is in the training instructional block. Students learn how to develop a unit training plan. They are given a scenario with a hypothetical unit, the mission they are supposed to accomplish, and the unit's current training status. Students work in teams to assess strengths and weaknesses of the unit, compiling a written summary of the gaps in training that must be addressed. Students then build a training plan that identifies and schedules training events to address the gaps in a timely manner. Students are also given classes on how to assess how successful their training plan was and how to refine it to make it better the next time, with the end result being that students are exposed to all the tools that will enable them to design and implement a training plan for any medium-size organization.

### **Other Skills and Competencies Taught**

Although it is not an explicit focus of the Advanced Course, instructors stated that the following skills and competencies are also taught:

- **Oral communication** is practiced regularly, since students participate extensively in small-group discussions, make presentations in front of class, and otherwise continue to practice their oral communication skills. Group presentations continue to be emphasized, as in other Marine Corps' courses, to emulate the style of Marine Corps' briefings, which are often presented in teams to a single commander or small group of individuals.
- **Managing and supervising the work of others:** The Advanced Course begins to focus the attention of students on this skill during lectures and small-group discussions. Students are taught how to design and implement various programs for their organizations, such as the unit's weight control program, stress management intervention program, and other initiatives that will require the students to focus the efforts and resources of others. Students receive lectures and discuss these lessons in small groups. However, instructors noted that students are not given practical application in these areas.
- **Teamwork and team-building** is indirectly emphasized in the Advanced Course through the peer environment. Students come from all military occupational specialties in the Marine Corps, which exposes them to different perspectives, preferences, and priorities.

Instructors noted that this requires students to focus on maximizing the potential contributions of all members to accomplish the assignment or task at hand. Although course documents show that the Advanced Course does not explicitly train or teach its students any additional teamwork or team-building skills, instructors noted that the peer environment indirectly emphasizes these skills.

### **Key Training Event: Unit Readiness Planning**

The Unit Readiness Planning block of classes in the Advanced Course illustrates many of the skills the course teaches. This block of classes requires students to produce a unit training plan for a notional organization. Instructors emphasized that this requires students to produce a high volume of analysis and work in a short time. Students must develop plans and analyses for their leaders in a way that presents all the information that those leaders need to make a decision. Students present plans and analyses in oral presentations that require them to clearly and convincingly convey their thoughts. The Unit Readiness Planning training event introduces students to the strategic world they will work in by virtue of their new ranks and positions in the Marine Corps.

## Technical Appendix

---

### ***How was this toolkit developed?***

RAND researchers developed these materials using a rigorous training review methodology. We first identified a list of the skills that civilian employers value in veterans and then expanded the list to include the skills that employers value in all employees. We defined each skill based on definitions that have been developed by the U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Office of Personnel Management, and other sources.

We then used a combination of course document review and course trainer interviews to determine which skills are among the top ones emphasized in each course. We vetted initial drafts of the toolkit with selected instructors and training developers, then revised appropriately based on the feedback. We show these top skills by course in the summary tables. Instructors and course lesson plans provided illustrative examples of how courses develop each of the top skills. These examples serve as the foundation for the course overviews.

### ***What are the limitations of this toolkit?***

There are several limitations to the materials included in this toolkit that we expect to be able to address in Phase II of this project. First, as already noted, this toolkit describes only skills gained through formal military training and only to the extent that they are significantly developed in the courses reviewed. Thus, for example, both “teamwork and team-building” (which is checked in multiple courses in the matrices) and “continuous learning” (which does not appear in the matrix) are further developed outside the courses listed here.

Second, this toolkit is the result of a pilot effort; it covers only a small portion of the formal military training that exists for enlisted veterans and that addresses nontechnical skills. As just one example, the toolkit includes reviews of military occupational specialty (MOS) content for several Army Advanced and Senior Leader Courses, but these reviews are not yet generalizable across all Advanced Leader Courses and Senior Leader Courses, respectively. We plan for future versions of this toolkit to include more courses within the combat arms branches and to expand to include more military branches and additional services.

Third, the content taught in any one course is dynamic—instructors constantly modify courses, and changes are not always documented. Therefore, the exact way a course is executed can vary to some degree by instructor, location, and date taught. This is particularly true for the Marine Corps Advanced Leader Course, which instructors were in the process of redesigning at the time these materials were created. Further, whether a given course is offered changes over time. Overall, this toolkit reflects courses as delivered in 2014. A veteran who was an Army E-5 in

2002, for example, will have taken a course different from (but related to) the Warrior Leaders Course that we reviewed.

Fourth, the toolkit was created based on course document review and interviews with feedback from a few instructors per course. It is possible that the information provided in the materials could differ if we had solicited feedback from different expert instructors in the various courses.

Finally, though not a limitation, note that some skills—such as conscientiousness or dependability—are sometimes considered stable traits rather than malleable skills. However, the military’s perspective is that proficiency in all skills referenced in this toolkit can be trained and developed over time. For the sake of conciseness, in these materials we refer to all skills, abilities, traits, and competencies as skills.

### ***What courses do we cover in this toolkit?***

In the Army, we reviewed the Basic Combat Training course required for all soldiers entering the Army, and the Warrior Leader Course required for all soldiers promoted to E-5. We also reviewed an Advanced Leader course and a Senior Leader course specific to jobs in the infantry and armor branches in the Army.

We also reviewed all courses in the Marine Corps taken by the majority of noncommissioned officers as required for promotion through the rank of E-7. We were unable to attain the relevant training materials or establish contact with the necessary training subject-matter experts to allow us to cover the Marine Corps basic training course. While there is also training in the marines that is MOS-specific, we did not try to review those courses, partly because of their number and partly because, compared with the common courses, only a portion of each course is focused on the training of nontechnical skills.

### ***Why are there no X’s in the Marine Corps summary table for recruit training?***

Recruit Training is the Marine Corps’ equivalent of the Army’s Basic Combat Training course. Recruit Training course materials were not available for us to review in this pilot effort, nor were instructors available to interview. However, it is logical to reason that many of the same skills emphasized by the Army as part of basic training would be emphasized in the Marine Corps’ equivalent. These skills are therefore included in the Marine Corps course summary table, but with a note indicating that their emphasis in the Recruit Training course has yet to be confirmed by instructors and through a review of the course materials.

### ***Why do the skills addressed in Army and Marine Corps courses for similarly ranked personnel differ?***

There are three reasons the toolkit suggests that the skills addressed in Army courses differ from those addressed in U.S. Marine Corps courses. First, as mentioned above, the Army and the Marine Corps make independent choices in their job and training analyses as to how much to emphasize the learning of skills in the schoolhouse versus on the job. Thus, for example, the Marine Corps may choose to emphasize written communication more in the schoolhouse, whereas the Army might choose to develop that skill more back at the unit.

Second, the components can organize training differently. For example, the Marine Corps Corporal's Course appears to address only three of the nontechnical skills largely because it is a short course that has a much more narrow focus than the other courses. However, the skills addressed in the Corporals Course when combined with the Sergeants Course do appear to be similar to those observed in the Army's Warrior Leader course. As a result, similarly ranked personnel in both organizations end up being exposed to similar skills in their formal training.

Third, the differences may be more apparent than real. For example, the Army tends to describe courses as addressing *management and supervision* and *teamwork and team-building*, whereas Marine Corps instructors tend to describe them more as addressing *leadership, influencing, and mentoring*. This could reflect a cultural difference between the types of jobs held by people of the same tenure and how the organization approaches training its personnel. Or it could just be that the lines of differentiation between the concepts of management and supervision, team-building, and leadership often blur. All are important elements of what many consider simply "leadership." As a result, the table is perhaps showing difference where there is none.

During interviews, we asked subject-matter experts to explain and clarify their definitions of these constructs so that we could judge how their illustrations fit into our definitions and our current work reflects these discussions. Some of these differences were ironed out during the interviews. However, further clarification requires further data collection and analysis. In the next phase of this project, we will refine our interview protocols and skill list as a means to obtain better alignment between Army and Marine Corps conceptions of the leadership constructs (e.g., being a good team member, team-building, managing others, or simply teaching them to lead, inspire, and mentor).